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RUEHC/DEPT OF INTERIOR WASHINGTON DC
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHINGTON DC
RHMFIUU/CDR USPACOM HONOLULU HI

UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 HANOI 001267

SENSITIVE
SIPDIS

STATE FOR EAP/MLS, EAP/EP, OES/EGC, OES/STC
STATE ALSO FOR T (JWOLCOTT, MHUMPHREY), ISN/NESS
(ABURKART,PMCNERNEY), ISN/RA (RBEISECKER) AND EAP/MLS
STATE PASS TO NUCLEAR REGULATORY COMMISSION (KFOGGIE,
JMCLELLAND-KERR, SBURNS)
ENERGY FOR DOE/NE (EMCGINNIS, CWELLING), NNSA/NA-21 (SFRAZER, KAPT,
DKOVACIC, SDICKERSON, IBOLSHINSKY, SMOSES, ABIENIAWSKI)
COMMERCE PLEASE PASS TO USTDA (DROSSITER)
COMMERCE FOR ITA/MAC/HONG-PHONG PHO

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [SENV](#) [ENRG](#) [ECON](#) [KGHG](#) [VM](#)

SUBJECT: VIETNAMESE SCIENCE MINISTER SUPPORTS NUCLEAR INITIATIVES,
QUESTION IS TIMING

Ref: A. Hanoi 1048 B. Hanoi 966

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11. (U) This is an action cable. Please see paragraph 4.

12. (SBU) In his meeting with Minister of Science and Technology Hoang Van Phong, Ambassador Michalak pressed for quick movement by the Government of Vietnam (GVN) to sign a bilateral Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for Cooperation in Nuclear Energy and Other Energy Fields and to join the Global Nuclear Energy Partnership (GNEP). Minister Hoang supported rapid action, but stated that it was unlikely the GVN could complete its review in time for Deputy Prime Minister Hoang Trung Hai to sign the MOU while in Washington next week. Instead, he suggested Ambassador Michalak sign the MOU with him or another high-ranking official in Hanoi. On joining GNEP, Minister Hoang stated it was a question of when, not if. However, the GVN wanted to complete its ongoing planning for the long-term development of the nuclear power sector before joining the GNEP partnership. End Summary.

Ambassador Urges Quick GVN Action on MOU

13. (SBU) Ambassador Michalak urged the GVN to accelerate its consideration of the nuclear cooperation MOU to allow Deputy Prime Minister Hai to sign the document while meeting with U.S. energy officials in Washington D.C. next week. Various ministries, including the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Industry and Trade (which is overseeing the development of Vietnam's first civilian nuclear power plants) had already voiced their support for the agreement (Ref A). As the Ministry of Science and Technology (MOST) has primary responsibility for regulating the nuclear sector, Ambassador Michalak again urged MOST to promptly push the document through the GVN bureaucracy.

GVN Wheels Turning, but Not Yet in High Gear

14. (SBU) Clearly better prepared to discuss nuclear energy than at their last meeting in August (Ref B), Minister Phong stated that

MOST had circulated the document for review by relevant ministries, but had not yet received all input. He would try to speed up the process, but did not think the GVN could be ready to sign the MOU by next week. Indeed, Deputy Prime Minister Hai did not have direct responsibility for the nuclear sector and it would be precedent setting for him to sign, instead of the Deputy Prime Minister who covered science and technology or the MOST minister himself (Note: Though this makes sense, none of interlocutors raised this issue until now). Instead, Minister Phong suggested that Ambassador Michalak could sign the MOU for the United States in Hanoi together with a representative from the GVN. Alternately, Vietnamese Ambassador Phuong could sign the MOU with the Department of Energy in Washington, though Phong preferred the first option.

14. (SBU) ACTION REQUEST: Please inform us if Ambassador Michalak has authority to sign this MOU on behalf of the U.S. Government. If so, we will quickly notify MOST, hopefully spurring them to finalize the document for signature.

GNEP: Yes, Yes, but Wait

15. (SBU) In response to the Ambassador's advocacy for Vietnamese participation in GNEP, Minister Phong saw many advantages to joining the partnership. However, the issue is timing. Phong noted that the GVN was discussing its long term nuclear power strategy and wanted to complete that planning before signing onto GNEP. Minister Phong then emphasized his desire to increase U.S. training for Vietnamese nuclear technicians, particularly in the areas of nuclear reactor safety and nuclear regulatory development.

Comment

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16. (SBU) The GVN will not be ready for Deputy Prime Minister Hai to sign the MOU in Washington next week. However, the document finally has made its way out of MOST. We hope that Minister Phong's increased attention and involvement will speed intra-GVN consideration. After all, the MOU makes the capacity building that he envisions more likely.

MICHALAK